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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR PRESENTS CREDENTIALS TO PRESIDENT
IAJUDDIN AND DISCUSSES BILATERAL RELATIONS

11. (U) On April 21, the Ambassador presented his credentials to Bangladeshi President Dr. Iajuddin Ahmed. The ceremony received wide spread press coverage in both the electronic and print media. Following the presentation of credentials the Ambassador held his first press conference with representatives of the local media (septel). He will meet with Foreign Secretary Touhid Hossain April 23, beginning his round of calls on GOB officials.

GOB Committed To Elections...

12. (U) During their private discussion that followed the ceremony, Iajuddin expressed his hope for a further strengthening of bilateral relations, including expanded trade relations, development assistance (including food aid), and bilateral education exchanges. He thanked the Ambassador for USG assistance in the aftermath of Cyclone Sidr, noting that Bangladeshis had a favorable impression of the United States. Iajuddin noted that Bangladesh was committed to democracy and holding elections on time. He also noted Bangladesh's commitment to supporting UN peacekeeping operations, and expressed hope for greater cooperation on counterterrorism, including future intelligence sharing with the US. He noted Bangladesh's success with microfinance, but hoped to see increased access to the world market for ready made garments. Iajuddin commented on his personal experience living and studying in the United States. (He spent six years in the U.S. as a graduate student at the University of Wisconsin--Madison.)

...Seeks PL-480 Debt Relief

13. (U) The Ambassador agreed with Iajuddin about the need to expand trade, commenting that Bangladesh continued to increase its exports to the United States. When Iajuddin raised PL-480 debt relief, the Ambassador explained that only Congress could waive the debt. Iajuddin noted that the large number of successful Bangladeshis resident in the United States. By way of example, he mentioned former U.S. Ambassador Osman Siddique, a Bangladeshi American who served as Ambassador to Fiji in the late 1990s. The Ambassador also told Iajuddin that he would look for ways to increase the number of Bangladeshi students in the United States, in particular at the graduate level. Iajuddin also extended an invitation for President Bush to visit Bangladesh.

Comment
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14. (SBU) Bangladesh's Presidency is largely ceremonial, and Iajuddin does not have any real influence on policy. Iajuddin's points thus reflect the concerns of the GOB bureaucracy. We interpret the GOB's decision to allow the Ambassador to present credentials so soon after arrival as a positive sign of their commitment to continuing to work closely with the USG.
Moriarty